REMARKS

The Applicants request reconsideration of the rejection.

1-3, 6, 8-10, 12, 15, 16, 19 and 25 remain pending.

Claims 1-3, 6, 8-10, 12, 15-16, 19 and 25 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Belani, U.S. Patent No. 6,772,350 (Belani) in view of Chang, U.S. Patent Publication No. 2003/0229623 (Chang). The Applicants traverse as follows.

Claims 1, 8, 10 and 16 are independent claims. Claims 1 and 8 have been amended to acquire the first means for categorizing permission setting values indicating whether object information items of various attributes of a registered user are disclosable to other persons <u>to allow the persons to communicate with the registered user</u> or not depending on a level of the disclosability, <u>each of said attributes relating to either a communication terminal used by the registered user or a service to be offered to the registered user via a network</u>. Belani, on the other hand, discloses at most that a user or group may be granted positive permission or negative permission according to the Office Action. This disclosure does not describe the access list information 50 of Belani as containing the permission setting values categorized by an unstated first means, nor does Belani disclose that the categorized permission setting values indicate whether object information items of various attributes of a registered user are disclosable to other persons <u>to allow the persons to communicate with the registered user</u> or not depending on a level of the disclosability. Further, Belani does not disclose the amended language, in which <u>each of the attributes relate to either a communication terminal used by the registered user or a service to be offered to the registered user via a network</u>.

Claim 8 has been similarly amended, and further recites communication means for communicating with a user communication terminal, to provide additional structure to the claimed server for clearer support of the other claimed structure.

The Applicants note that the Examiner finds Belani to not explicitly teach that the second means checks, when there is a request from the user to change the permission setting value for any permission level other than the highest-level operation for any of the object information items, consistency of the permission setting value for each level higher than the level for which the change request has been made with the permission setting value for which the change request has been made, and that the second means corrects, when there is a contradiction in the consistency, the permission setting value for each level higher than the level for which the request to change the setting value has been made. Chang is cited as teaching this feature of the invention, but the Applicants do not see how the explanation set forth on page 4 of the Office Action describes the claimed second means, and in particular the consistency check performed by the claimed second means in response to a request from the user to change the permission setting value for any permission level other than the highest-level operation. The Office Action refers to Chang's 8b, but there appears to be no disclosure of the request, or the consistency check performed by a second means.

Independent claim 10 has been amended to recite that the interface for receiving transmitted information receives such information from a user communication terminal, and that the storage means has an entry table for storing object information items corresponding to various attributes of a registered user and permission setting values indicating whether the attribute information items are

disclosable to other persons <u>to allow the persons to communicate with the registered</u> <u>user</u> or not, the permission setting values being categorized in accordance with a level of the disclosability thereof, <u>each of the attributes relating to either a</u> <u>communication terminal used by the registered user or a service to be offered to the</u> <u>registered user via a network</u>. Claim 10 is thus distinguishable from Belani in view of Chang for reasons similar to those advanced above.

Chang also fails to teach the claimed means for extracting a request to change any of the permission setting values from received information, or judging means for judging whether or not the permission setting value for which the change request has been made is contradictory to any of the permission setting values higher in rank than the setting value by referencing the entry table. The Office Action cites the same passage regarding Chang's 8b which was distinguished above. Accordingly, the functionality performed by the structure of claim 10 is not shown by Chang.

Independent claim 16 recites a method for controlling a server, including a step of categorizing permission setting values indicating whether object information items corresponding to various attributes of a registered user are disclosable to other persons <u>to allow the persons to communicate with the registered user</u> or not into a plurality of levels, <u>each of the attributes relating to either a communication terminal</u> <u>used by the registered user or a service to be offered to the registered user via a</u> <u>network</u>. This language thus imitates the language distinguished above, and thus claim 16 is patentable over Belani in view of Chang as well. Similarly to the discussion above, the steps of receiving from a registered user a request to change the permission setting value for a specified one of the object information items,

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determining a level of the permission setting value for which the change request has been made, and judging whether there is contradiction between the permission setting values belonging to any level higher than the determined level and the permission setting value for which the change request has been made are not disclosed by Chang. As noted, Chang does not disclose the precondition of a change request of a user, or the steps performed in response to the change request.

The dependent claims inherit the patentable features of the respective independent claim from which each is derived, and thus the dependent claims are patentable as well. The Applicants make no admission as to the propriety of the rejections concerning the dependent claims.

In addition, the Applicants note that the specific rejection of claim 3 fails to raise a *prima facie* case of obviousness. In particular, the Examiner states that Belani does not explicitly teach that the first means categorizes the permission setting values into exactly three respective levels, where executability of open operation is set as a permission level higher than the executability of read operation and executability of read operation is set as a permission level higher than the executability of write operation. This paragraph, found on page 6, appears to be an effort to consolidate the limitations set forth in claims 2 and 3. However, too much consolidation has been made by the Examiner, to the extent that the rejection does not address various limitations in these two claims.

Therefore, the bare recital of Chang as filling the missing teachings does not meet the requirement for a *prima facie* case of obviousness, even when taken in combination with Belani, because the Office Action does not allege that Chang discloses each and every feature that is missing from Belani. Indeed, to the extent

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that Chang is discussed on page 6, there is no reference to any passage in Chang to support the rejection. The Applicants respectfully submit that Chang does not teach the features that are missing from Belani, and thus no case of obviousness is made.

To the extent necessary, Applicants petition for an extension of time under 37 CFR 1.136. Please charge any shortage in fees due in connection with the filing of this paper, including extension of time fees, or credit any overpayment of fees, to the deposit account of Mattingly, Stanger, Malur & Brundidge, P.C., Deposit Account No. 50-1417 (referencing attorney docket no. NIT-415-02).

Respectfully submitted,

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